Office of the Governor

NEWS RELEASE

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Whitman Announces November 30th End of HOV Lanes Elimination Would Reduce Congestion and Improve Air Quality

NJ Gov. Christie Whitman today informed Rodney Slater, the US Secretary of Transportation, that the state would act upon provisions in the newly-enacted federal budget and eliminate the high occupancy vehicle lanes on Interstate 287 and Interstate 80 in New Jersey.

"After careful analysis of the situation, New Jersey has concluded that the lanes do not succeed in alleviating traffic congestion or improving air quality, and that their removal is warranted," the Governor wrote Slater today. "Accordingly, the State intends to termin- ate their operation on Monday, November 30, 1998."

"We have taken a long, hard look at New Jersey's HOV lanes and concluded that they simply are not producing the results that we all had hoped for," she wrote.

The Governor's decision to eliminate the HOV lanes came immediately after the President signed into law federal spending bills that included provisions sponsored by Reps. Marge Roukema, Rod Frelinghuysen and Sen. Frank Lautenberg. Those provisions require the Secretary of Transportation to waive repayment of federal funds used for the construction of HOV lanes on I-287 if the State makes a finding that the lanes are ineffective in reducing congestion or improving air quality.

The Secretary of Transportation already has the authority to waive financial responsibility for the elimination of HOV lanes on I-80.

In the Governor's letter she notes that the lanes are not only failing to meet their original goals, but, in fact are adding to congestion and to air pollution.

"The report indicates that the HOV lanes actually create additional safety problems for motorists and show no indication of being able to provide congestion relief in the future," Whitman's letter said.

"The findings also provide evidence that the HOV lanes have not succeeded in their mission to improve air quality. The analysis concludes that the elimination of the HOV lanes would overall increase air quality in New Jersey," she wrote.

A copy of the Governor's letter and the findings by the NJ Department of Transportation are attached.

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